



# PERSPECTIVE IS EVERYTHING: HOW TO INTEGRATE TEMPLATES AND TOOLS TO MEET ONLINE ACCESSIBILITY

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## Introduction

- The growth of online programs has provided new learning opportunities for both traditional students as well as students with disabilities. Online programs have led to increases in access to higher education, but this does not necessarily equate to increased accessibility in terms of course content, learning activities, and assessment.
- ❖ Students with disabilities may not be receiving the services needed to succeed in online programs, especially as they come to campus infrequently, or not at all (Betts et al., 2013).
  - ❖ A culture of inclusiveness is not only needed in a classroom, but should also describe the online learning environment (Glazatov, 2012).
  - ❖ The Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, defines online accessibility in systematic terms: An accessible information technology system is one that can be operated in a variety of ways and does not rely on a single sense or ability of the user.
  - ❖ Students with disabilities may not know they must self-identify.
  - ❖ Faculty may not be aware of the accommodation process for students with disabilities require.

The goals of incorporating the use of a template includes consistent accessibility tools in online courses and help for individual faculty in addressing the needs of all students in a way that enables both student groups to bridge existing gaps between not only academics but social differences. Hence, advocating and supporting the creation of a community that emphasizes a feeling of belonging for both groups working towards the following goals:

- ❖ provide for equal awareness of both groups, thus alleviating discriminatory thoughts and actions for campus communities
- ❖ increase overall classroom instruction effectiveness for all students
- ❖ increase retention rates of “at-risk” students.

## Americans with Disabilities

**Legislation. Federal regulation mandates guidelines concerning Americans with disabilities.**

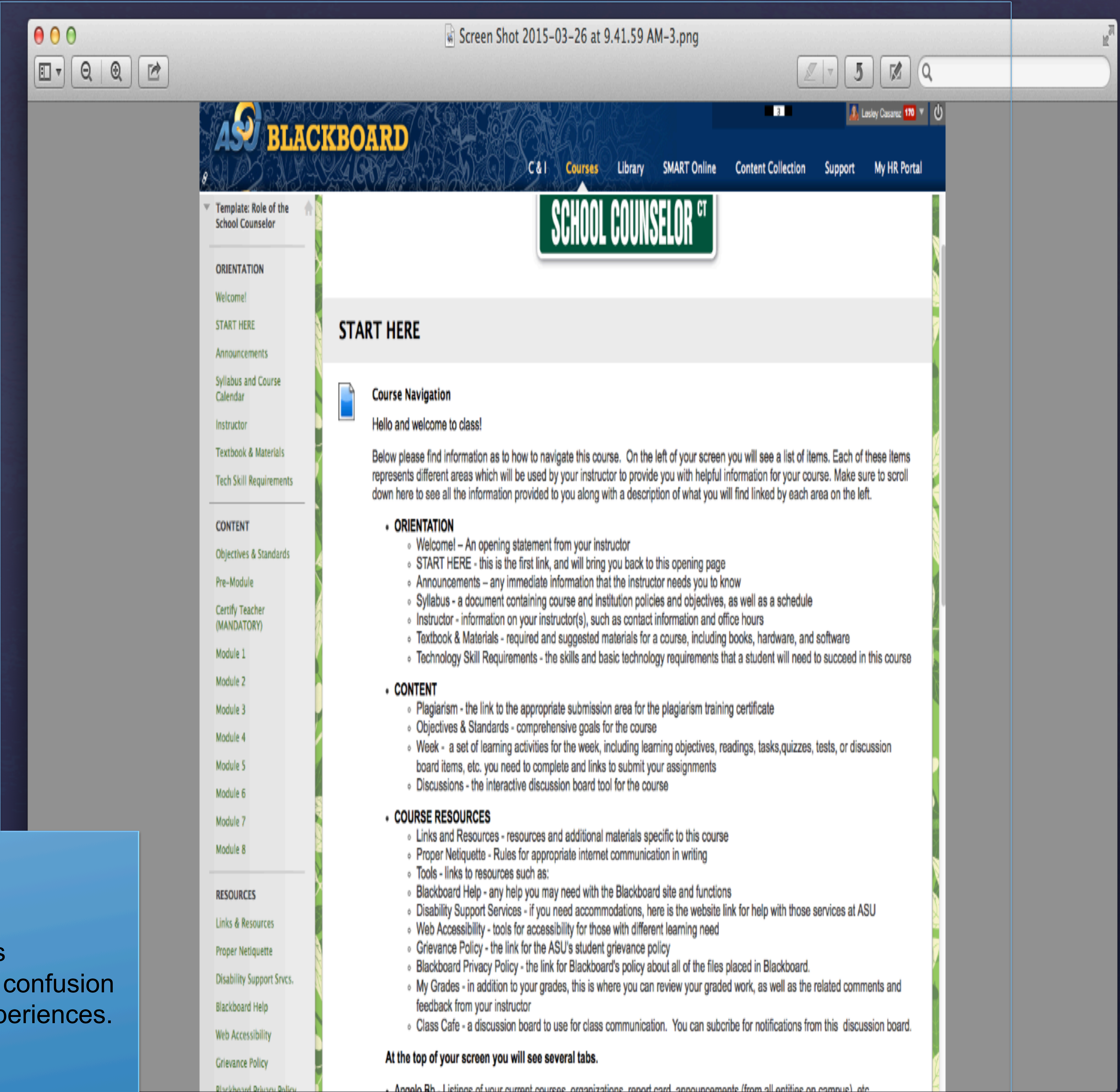
- ❖ **1965:** Higher Education Act (HEA) provides qualified students educational accessibility regardless of economic status (Madaus et. Al, 2012).
- ❖ **1990:** Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expanded the definition of disability. While it is the most expansive legislative piece for students with disabilities, it excludes many facets of postsecondary opportunities (Bernstein, 2014).
- ❖ **2008:** Higher Education Opportunity Act replaced the HEA. It addresses higher education’s affordability, accountability requirements, and minority-serving colleges (Madaus et. Al, 2012).

- Recent Trends and Practices.** While educating special needs students in K-12 have been slow, students with disabilities pursuing higher education opportunities continue to fall behind compared to their counterparts.
- ❖ Areas lacking include study skills, organization skills, social interactions, academic areas, and low self-esteem
  - ❖ Special needs students do not have the same access to same resources as their counterparts
  - ❖ Special needs students are not always identified to professors. Regulation does not require higher education institutions to automatically accommodate students.
  - ❖ Students may not know not know to self-identify; therefore, they receive the same accommodations as their counterparts
  - ❖ The online environment contributes to students with disabilities being identified.

## Template

- ◆ **Goal:** Furnish a basic structure that maintains consistency across courses and ends student confusion resulting in an increase in student learning experiences.

## Addressing Compliance and Assessibility



## Disclosure

- One’s decision for disclosing a disability will always be personal.
- ❖ **Advocates** push for disclosure for several reasons: contact, therapeutic purposes, disability identification, education and discrimination
  - ❖ **Advocates** felt the only way to rid society of the quick discrimination card was through advocacy using education, public contact, and protest
  - ❖ **Non-advocates** vote for using caution when disclosing disabilities for negative responses and/or consequences may occur
  - ❖ **Students without Documented Disabilities** may feel they can continue as their counterparts during their college years in order to have a positive sense of belonging

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## Additional Compliances

To view additional compliance areas pertaining to online courses reaching to all students scan the QR code

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